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Monitoring progress in the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests

Note by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

The implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) proposals for action and the continued international dialogue in the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) were initiated after the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. These parallel processes provide unique opportunities for monitoring, reviewing and reporting. This note covers these topics and identifies opportunities to:

- (a) Identify existing data and information sources relevant to management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests;
- (b) Develop a framework for assessment in the long term;
- (c) Identify parameters associated with issues reflecting the IPF/IFF programme of work to discern progress, preferably ones that are measurable and already collected;
- (d) Encourage and support ongoing efforts to create synergies and compatibility among a set of fairly fragmented data collections.



It should be recognized that any data collected by countries for regional and global purposes should have a tangible value at the national level. Consequently, monitoring, assessment and reporting requirements at the regional or international levels need to be integrated into national forest programmes and the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The intergovernmental discussions on forests of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the former Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and its successor the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), as well as other international discussions, attest that forests are no longer viewed from a purely conservationist, economic or industrial perspective. The implementation of the agreements and recommendations stemming from these processes will require concerted action and allocation of resources in the short, medium and long terms. The main tools and actors for this implementation are primarily dealt with under programme element I.a, "Facilitation and promotion of implementation" (E/CN.17/IFF/1998/2), as well as under programme element II.e, "Forest-related work of international and regional organizations" (E/CN.17/IFF/1998/5). Both these issues will receive substantive discussion at the second session of IFF. With the recognition that forests provide multiple benefits and have diverse constituencies, that trends and policies in other sectors have an impact on the state of forests, and that implementation of sustainable forest management requires diverse tools and actors, follows the need to assess progress towards sustainable forest management and to base policies affecting forests on the best information available. It is fundamentally the need to assess progress at the national level that will then drive and provide the basis for any assessment undertaken at other levels of aggregation, i.e., regional and/or global.

II. MANDATE AND SCOPE

A. Mandate

2. At its first session, IFF decided that the work of its forthcoming sessions should be conducted according to three interlinked categories, which should receive balanced intergovernmental attention.

3. The first of these three categories, "Promoting and facilitating the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, and reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests", contains two elements: I.a and I.b. The focus of the present note is programme element I.b, "Monitoring progress in the implementation of the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests". The report of the Secretary-General on programme element I.a (E/CN.17/IFF/1998/2) deals with the facilitation and promotion of implementation.

4. At its first session, the Forum decided that programme element I.b would receive background discussion at its second session. The Forum also decided that the background and substantive discussions on programme element I.b should be guided by the following mandate:

Monitoring progress in implementation: consider the mechanisms, process and format for reviewing, monitoring and reporting on progress; and assess progress in implementation, inter alia, by countries, United Nations

agencies, other international organizations and major groups, including the private sector, and indigenous people, forest dwellers, forest owners and local communities.

B. Scope

5. The purpose of the present note is to assist IFF in its background discussion on the mechanism, process and format for reviewing, monitoring and reporting, and to assess progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. It is assumed that no new reporting and/or data-collection mechanism at the international level would be initiated during the current IFF process. Rather, a discussion could be initiated on the form that such monitoring, reviewing and reporting could take in the medium and long terms, at the national, regional and global levels, while taking advantage of already ongoing discussions within the United Nations system on streamlining of reporting. Accordingly, the note provides a short review of some information sources for forest-related data and information, and then suggests an approach to review how available data sources can be used and integrated for intergovernmental assessment.

III. INFORMATION AND DATA GATHERING ON FORESTS

6. In order to provide an initial overview of the mechanisms that are available and could be used to analyse progress achieved in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, a few examples and short descriptions of some forest-related information-gathering activities within the United Nations system and elsewhere are provided below.

A. United Nations

7. A number of organizations gather forest-related data and/or information; countries and others, such as correspondents, report periodically to them. Most notable here are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), as well as United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Forest resource assessment

8. FAO collects information on different types of forest worldwide from national focal points. The scope is global and the data are collected and published every 10 years, with an update every five years. This exercise is also complemented by a capacity-building and technical assistance programme for national and regional forest assessment and information collection. This assessment is unique in that it collects national information for regional and global aggregation, which is widely used all over the world. The Forest Resource Assessment 2000 is much wider in substantive scope than has been the

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case for previous assessments. It not only includes forest cover but also requests information on biological diversity and protection status; wood supply and carbon sequestration functions; forest conditions; forest fires; non-wood goods and services; and protective and socio-economic functions.

Trade data and production data

9. Country-level data on production, imports and exports of different wood forest products, in terms of both value and volume, are also collected by FAO. Its scope is global and is collected annually from national focal points and designated correspondents. This information is available on the FAO Web pages through an interactive database.

Pulp and paper capacities survey

10. FAO also collects data on pulp and paper production capacities, organized by country and product. The survey is based on information provided by national focal points, correspondents and secretariat estimates. This annual survey is global in scope, and includes five-year projections.

Forest-sector financing and investments

11. FAO collects data on official development assistance and other investment and financing data to support its forest sector monitoring. These data are periodically collected through national focal points and correspondents. The collection is global in scope, and includes projections and FAO estimates.

Monitoring of national forest programmes

12. FAO is the repository for national forest programmes and monitors implementation through FAO's country and regional advisers in the field. Collection and updating of this information takes place on a continuous basis.

State of the World's Forests

13. FAO started publishing this overarching report on the state of the world's forest four years ago upon the recommendation of the High-Level Advisory Group on Forests convened in 1994 to give advice on FAO's work on forests. The report aims to fill a very important gap of easy-to-access and understandable information on issues that affect forests, to be used by the public, policy makers and others. So far, two issues have been published, in 1995 and in 1997; the third issue will become available in 1999.

14. The State of the World's Forests assesses information on forests available to FAO both in-house and from other sources. It includes an aggregated version of the latest data from the Forest Resource Assessment, as well as on past and future trends. The latest issue had special sections giving regional perspectives on the state of forests. The two 1995 and 1997 issues included chapters highlighting policy developments relevant to forests, both in the forest sector itself as well as in other sectors affecting forests, such as agriculture. The reports have also covered such aspects as economic and social development in the forest sector, as well as environmental aspects, such as

conservation, and forests' contribution to environmental stability. In the foreword of the 1997 issue, FAO specifically stated its intention to form partnerships with those doing related work in order to cast its net wider and capture more information and data in order to present a more complete picture of the world's forests.

2. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

15. UNIDO collects data on the manufacturing sector, including wood and pulp and paper industries. Its Industrial Statistics Yearbook contains information on wood products, furniture and paper and paper products manufacturing, collected from national sources, as well as UNIDO's own estimates. UNIDO also has a commodity balance statistics database, which contains data on different grades of wood pulp, boards etc. traded as commodities.

3. Economic Commission for Europe

16. ECE, in collaboration with FAO, collects and reports on data on forests in Europe and North America, covering both forest quantity and forest quality. ECE is the repository for data on forests affected by pollution. It also collects trade and production data. ECE work is used for the Forest Resource Assessment, which is coordinated by FAO.

4. Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

United Nations Statistics Division

17. In the United Nations Statistics Division, work is progressing in compiling environmental indicators from national statistical services based on a core set of indicators, as approved by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session. The Division, a part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, is also preparing a manual on environmental statistics and indicators. The manual will contain concepts, definitions, classifications and descriptions of data sources, tabulations and data uses for environmental indicators. The Division also collects information on fuelwood use as part of its energy statistics programme.

National reports

18. The Division for Sustainable Development is the repository for the national reports on progress in implementing Agenda 21, in accordance with the Commission on Sustainable Development's programme of work. Countries are requested to submit national reports each year on a voluntary basis, focusing on the programme of work of the Commission of any particular year. It has requested information on forests, twice - in 1995, when chapter 11 of Agenda 21 and the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles) were on the Commission's agenda, and in 1997 for the

country profiles presented at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. It will request information on forests again for the eighth session of the Commission in the year 2000, when forests will be on the agenda.

Work programme on indicators of sustainable development and international work programme on changing consumption and production patterns

19. The Division for Sustainable Development is responsible for the work programme on indicators of sustainable development. This ongoing work programme has developed a working list of indicators of sustainable development, divided into four categories - social, economic, environmental and institutional. Three types of indicators have then been identified for each category: driving force indicators, state indicators and response indicators. For chapter 11 of Agenda 21 on combating deforestation, the driving force indicator is wood harvesting intensity; the state indicator is forest area change; and the response indicator is managed forest area ratio and protected forest area as a percentage of total forest area.

20. Within the Division and under the work programme of the Commission, there is also ongoing work on measuring critical trends in consumption and production patterns. The current challenge of the work programme is to identify a provisional core set of indicators. In monitoring the sustainability of land use, the work programme has proposed a set of indicators involving forests, such as land use per sector, per capita and/or as a percentage of total land area; land use change per sector as a percentage change over unit of time; change in land condition. It has also proposed subsidies for agricultural inputs, as a percentage of their price, among others.

5. United Nations Environment Programme

21. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has collected country studies on biodiversity that to a large extent should be relevant to forests. It also has the Global Resource Information Database (GRID) Meta Directory, the Infoterra database and a database on environment economics, containing mostly publications. It has also produced the Global Biodiversity Assessment, the Environmental Data Report, the Global Outlook and the World Atlas of Desertification.

6. United Nations Development Programme

22. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized and convened an expert meeting in Israel in March 1997 on synergies in national implementation of the UNCED agreements, i.e., the Forest Principles, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Among the topics raised at the meeting was the issue of information, monitoring and reporting.¹ The meeting concluded that there were three areas of physical overlap among the agreements, among them the role of forests. It was recommended that a core data set on forest type and extent serve the need for

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forest background information for each of the instruments. In addition, modifications to forest inventory methods by including data of interest to other instruments and the development of common definitions of terms and indicators could go a long way in creating the necessary synergies and avoid duplication of data collection. This meeting also identified a set of forest-related information needs common to most of the instruments, including forest area/extent; forest type; species composition; distribution by zone (altitude, climate); status of naturalness; forest condition and health; common flora and fauna; forest density; forest age structure; regeneration type and rate; deforestation (area by type); afforestation (area, by type); timber use and fate; site location (elevation, slope, aspect); growing stock/biomass; and canopy information.

B. Regional organizations

1. Southern Africa Development Community

23. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Forestry Sector Technical Coordination Unit,² located in Malawi, collects data on the region's forest resources and utilization. These data are made available on the Internet in the form of searchable databases. The databases are divided into six categories: human resources, education and training; forest resources; basic data, including economic indicators, donors active in forests in the region and non-governmental organizations; forest research; forest utilization; and forest economics.

2. Association of South-East Asian Nations

24. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Institute of Forest Management,³ located in Malaysia, has a resource inventory section, which develops resource inventory and monitoring techniques of forest resources in the region. The Institute also provides technical advice and training, and develops standard multiple resource inventory methodologies.

C. International conventions and agreements

1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

25. The Conference of Parties to the Convention report on both the amount of carbon stored in forests and emissions of carbon resulting from land-use changes, such as through harvesting and deforestation.

2. Convention on Biological Diversity

26. Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have submitted their first national reports on measures taken for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. In accordance with decisions of the Conference of the Parties, these reports focused on the implementation of article 6 of the Convention, concerning the development of national biodiversity strategies and

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action plans, and the integration of biological diversity conservation and sustainable use into sectoral and cross-sectoral planning and policy. The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (held at Bratislava in May 1998) considered a synthesis of the information contained in the 107 reports so far received. The Conference of the Parties adopted a further decision on national reports (decision IV/14), as well as a decision on forest biological diversity (decision IV/7).

3. Convention on combating desertification

27. UNEP produced the World Atlas on Desertification, inter alia, as a contribution to the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. Data on climate, soil degradation and vegetation were combined and analysed using geographical information systems. The Atlas provides a valuable reference point for future monitoring, assessment and reporting within the Convention.⁴

4. International Tropical Timber Agreement

28. The International Tropical Timber Organization collects data related to market and trade information of tropical timbers, such as production, import, export and log prices. It also inquires about such topics as tariffs, incentives and disincentives that could affect trade. ITTO also collects data on species composition and the use of lesser-used species in trade, capacities in forest products industries, as well as the general market situation for tropical timber, such as housing starts. ITTO also has several projects for assisting parties in data collection and gathering market information.

D. Non-governmental organizations

1. World Conservation Monitoring Centre

29. The World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), together with the Centre for International Forest Research (CIFOR), has recently produced a significant amount of data and analysis on the protection status of the world's forests, including data on forest location, by type, and the amount of each type protected in each region of the world; data can be easily accessed through WCMC's Web pages.⁵

2. World Resources Institute

30. The World Resources Institute (WRI), in its publication World Resources, presents data on forests cover, deforestation etc., mainly using data from FAO. In the 1996-1997 issue of this publication, WRI estimated, based on FAO deforestation data, the levels of carbon dioxide emissions from other than industrial processes, including those stemming from land-use change. WRI

provides independent analysis, conclusions and recommendations on resource use as a whole, including forest lands.

E. Commercial

31. Several private companies collect and analyse data for a fee. These companies focus particularly on the forest and forest products industry. For example, the 1997 Southern Hemisphere Forest Industry Yearbook⁶ contains data on afforestation, wood flows, pulp and paper, solid wood manufacturing and panels and boards for Chile, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Some financial and marketing data can also be found on the Internet. In some cases, there are links to stock and other exchange market information on traded forest products and pulp and paper or wood-related firms, options, futures, funds and indices. Many of these are updated on a daily basis.

IV. MECHANISM, PROCESS AND FORMAT FOR REVIEWING, MONITORING, REPORTING AND ASSESSING PROGRESS IN THE MANAGEMENT, CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL TYPES OF FORESTS

A. Background

32. The Forum recognized the need to clarify the approaches towards measuring progress in management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests in a systematic and coordinated fashion. At all levels, many of the existing data and information sources are fragmented, in terms of both subject and location of the repository. This might not necessarily pose a problem since data on specific topics, such as forest biodiversity or forest investments, ought to be collected with a comparative advantage by an organization that is directly concerned with the topic and possesses relevant expertise.

33. Many reports are available on issues that have an impact on forests. However, they are not necessarily produced with forests as a primary focus. Much of the data involved do have relevance to forests, but their analysis, review and reporting might not specifically deal with forests. There are relatively few examples of integrated analysis, interpretation and reporting on forests. One notable exception is the recently launched State of the World's Forests, published biannually by FAO.

34. To design the structure and operationalize a mechanism, process and format for reviewing, monitoring, reporting and assessing progress takes several years. Therefore, for the third session of the Forum, quantitative information is not expected to be available to permit an assessment of progress made in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests since the formulation of the IPF proposals for action little more than a year ago. Nor is it envisaged that available information will show that the IPF proposals for action have had any discernible impact on the actual bio-physical state of the world's forests. Very few, if any, of the IPF proposals for action entailed any specific target against which countries could easily measure progress. Most of the proposals for action urge countries, major groups and

international organizations to promote the application of certain guidelines, principles and/or agreed concepts in formulating and developing strategies for forests and forest-related issues. It is important to note, however, that a large number of national, regional and international initiatives have been launched by countries, international organizations and major groups (see E/CN.17/IFF/1998/2).

B. Possible parameters

35. Regardless of level (i.e., national, regional and/or global), it would be important to decide at the onset what needs to be measured and assessed, as well as the level of accuracy needed. The parameters against which progress can be assessed should ideally be simple, collected periodically, and allow meaningful and insightful policy analyses and assessments.

1. Link between indicators and assessment

36. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, in its report on its fourth session (E/CN.17/1997/12), concluded, inter alia, that forests constitute a cross-sectoral issue, and that there is a need for a broad spectrum of quantitative, qualitative and descriptive indicators covering social, cultural, economic, ecological, institutional, and legal and policy elements. Although the Panel had divergent views on the merits of a core set of criteria and indicators for use at the global level, they recognized that the dialogue should continue in order to improve consistency in reporting on forest assessment and sustainable forest management. For example, the Group of Eight industrialized countries, at its summit at Birmingham, United Kingdom, in 1998, also acknowledged that criteria and indicators provide a common framework for describing, monitoring and assessing, over time, progress towards sustainable forest management. The link between the national level and the FAO global Forest Resources Assessment is important in providing consistent, reliable and compatible forest data on a global basis.⁸

37. In due course, a harmonized and compatible core set of criteria and indicators might become a useful tool available to decision makers at all levels in the forest sector. The lack of a core set of criteria and indicators does not deter from the fact that there are collections of forest-related data that have national, regional or global scope and that have been collected over a period of time which could be used to discern progress. A positive aspect of the ongoing criteria and indicator processes is that data and information needs are identified primarily for their value to national efforts.

38. Over the long term, the criteria and indicator processes will provide invaluable and finely tuned instruments not only for national and subnational efforts but also for international assessments. IFF, as a policy forum, presumably would not need or want to examine the same level of detail as, for example, a scientist or other professionals involved in sustainable forest management at the national, subnational and forest management unit levels. In contrast to most national-level efforts, IFF may wish to consider elements of a framework that can be used as a broad and simple diagnostic tool for assessing

progress, preferably by using already available highly aggregated data, parameters and mechanisms.

2. Framework

39. Whatever parameters one chooses to use, it is obvious that the level of economic development, type and amount of forest in a particular country, as well as social conditions, will determine in what areas and at what pace progress can be achieved and measured at a particular point in time. Progress in individual parameters used to assess management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests will not be even at all times, neither globally, regionally nor at the country level.

40. It would be preferable to review progress that takes into account both development level and extent of forests cover of countries. One possibility would be to review and assess progress within the typology of countries with (a) low per capita income and low per capita forest cover; (b) low per capita income and high per capita forest cover; (c) high per capita income and low per capita forest cover; and (d) high per capita income and high per capita forest cover.

41. This kind of approach could possibly identify: (a) commonalties among countries facing similar priority areas of concern, as well as (b) the parameters, (c) factors and (d) interventions in forest-related policies and sectors that have been critical in the past and possible lessons that can be learned.

42. The Forum may wish to identify a framework and broad areas for monitoring, reviewing and reporting. This framework could encompass levels of economic and social development and environmental protection, and/or management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests; or a mix of both. Organization of the data at the national, regional/eco-regional and global levels would provide additional valuable perspectives. Reaching a consensus on how to array the many core issues on the IPF/IFF agendas, either for the purpose of monitoring, reviewing and reporting or to identify possible elements, is a critical task for the Forum.

43. It is proposed that the Forum consider clustering issues that reflect the IPF/IFF programme of work into the following categories: (a) economic development, (b) social development, and (c) environmental protection/ecological considerations, with an additional component of (d) institutions and policy instruments. This approach is consistent with the frameworks followed by most criteria and indicator processes, as well as with the conclusions and proposals for action by IPF.

44. In order to assist monitoring at the global level, the Forum may also wish to subdivide the above categories, as follows:

(a) Economic development:

- (i) Supply and demand of wood and non-wood forest products and services;

- (ii) Value of international cooperation;
- (iii) Value of forest and forest products industry investments;
- (iv) Value of international trade in forest products and services;
- (b) Social development:
 - (i) State and level of forest-related education and training;
 - (ii) Forest ownership and user-rights patterns;
 - (iii) State and level of forest-related employment;
 - (iv) Level of participation by local populations in decision-making, resources management and benefit sharing;
- (c) Environmental protection:
 - (i) Forest cover, changes; quantity and quality;
 - (ii) Level of forest conservation and protection;
 - (iii) State of forest services: biodiversity, carbon sinks/reservoirs, soil and water;
- (d) Institutions and policy instruments:
 - (i) National forest programmes: implementation;
 - (ii) Criteria and indicators: implementation;
 - (iii) Forest assessments: implementation;
 - (iv) Economic instruments and tax policies: implementation.

C. Possible models

45. Within the overall framework of national forest programmes, a possible model could be designed with the objective of achieving an integrated and cross-sectoral assessment of progress in the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The Forum has decided that such a model should contain monitoring, reviewing, reporting, and assessment for policy-making. National, regional and international policy and decision makers could then decide on further actions needed. Even if such a framework were to consist of already existing mechanisms, additional support at the national, regional and global levels would be necessary. The examples set out below are mostly from the global or regional levels, but the components for monitoring and reviewing and reporting that they outline would also be applicable at the national level.

1. Monitoring

Collection of data and information

46. Data and information collection is undertaken in many forms: voluntary, such as national reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development; obligatory, such as national reports under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and global and/or regional, such as the forest assessment collected by FAO and ECE.

47. Data and information can be obtained through, for example, national reports to a central body; questionnaires; country visits, such as "twinning", as conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); hearings, such as by World Commission on Forest Sustainable Development; monitoring networks and/or remote sensing; and national focal points or independent correspondents, such as data collected by FAO for its forest resource assessments and UNIDO for its industrial statistics database.

Data organization

48. The value of data lies in the manner in which it is organized. In the forest sector, it could be organized by the Forest Principles or the IPF/IFF programme elements; by factors concerning economic, social, environmental/biophysical and institutional/policy issues; predetermined priority areas; political or ecological regions; forest type, or state of development.

2. Reviewing

Analysis and interpretation

49. The review, analysis and interpretation of the data is usually accomplished by the collecting or monitoring agency, and/or by another designated agency, and/or by independent experts, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia etc. In some cases, the review and analysis are made with a specific mandate stemming from an intergovernmental body, instrument or governing bodies. Transparency and accessibility of data and information is important, so that as many actors as possible can draw their own conclusions from the best available information.

3. Reporting

Presentation and dissemination

50. All United Nations organizations report periodically to their governing bodies, and some of these reports are relevant for monitoring forest-related issues. These bodies often review policies and measures undertaken by Governments, international organizations and major groups. For example, in FAO, the Committee on Forestry meets every two years; the governing body of UNEP meets every year, and may or may not consider forest-related issues, depending on its agenda; the ITTO governing body, the International Tropical Timber

Council, meets every year; and the Commission on Sustainable Development meets every year, and the practice has been to consider forest issues every three to five years.

4. Assessment for policy and decision-making

51. Assessments for policy and decision-making take place in various national and international processes. It can be accomplished through a parliamentary or intergovernmental body or the Conference of the Parties of a regional or international instrument. Assessments are also carried out through independent expert panels, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and/or by individual experts, national and international organizations, major groups and academia.

52. None of the above examples are necessarily mutually exclusive; they could all be a part of any integrated national, regional or global effort. A more detailed description of various existing mechanisms for reviewing and reporting, primarily in the United Nations system but also within such organizations as OECD and the European Union, is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on modalities for the exchange of national experiences at the regional level (E/CN.17/1998/9).

5. Streamlining of reporting

53. The Commission on Sustainable Development, in its early deliberations, considered the need for streamlining reporting requirements in the field of sustainable development. This concern was largely driven by two considerations: the increasing number of international legal agreements and intergovernmental decisions that were calling for national reporting on issues of relevance to sustainable development; and the cross-sectoral nature of sustainable development itself. Following a decision by the Commission, the Division for Sustainable Development prepared a four-year calendar that reflects the periodicity, scheduling and focus of these reporting requirements across the United Nations system, as well as the relevant conventions.

54. In a consultative meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, the possibility of adopting a common format or even a single format for requesting information for Governments was discussed. However, it was felt that this would not be feasible for the following reasons: (a) mandated requests for information vary in their timing, periodicity and scope; (b) they are addressed to very different clientele at the national level (e.g., most intergovernmental bodies have designated specific national focal points as their interlocutors); and (c) the kind of information ranges widely (e.g., from statistical to assessment to experiential). It was agreed that information relevant to the issues contained in Agenda 21 should be requested in such a manner that Governments would not be asked to provide the same information to more than one United Nations organization. This presupposes that organizations review what is available "in-house" and ensure that they make "value added" requests; and that the information is made fully accessible, preferably via the

World Wide Web. This is, in fact, one of the major intended purposes of the United Nations system-wide sustainable development Web site.⁹

V. ASSESSMENT PARAMETERS, INFORMATION SOURCES AND THE INTERNET

A. Assessment and information

55. Using the framework suggested in sect. IV.B above, the following matrix is proposed using some of the descriptions of information sources above. This matrix could give an indication of how these information sources fit into the suggested general framework:

Information sources

Economic development

FAO: Supply and demand surveys; pulp and paper capacity; trade and production; forest sector financing and investments; Forest Resources Assessment 2000

ITTO: Pricing and trade data of tropical timbers

UNIDO: Forest products manufacturing sector data

World Bank: Valuation, IFC forest products industry investment data

Various commercial information sources

Social development

FAO: FRA 2000; State of the World's Forests; capacity-building data

UNIDO: Employment data

Environment/biophysical

FAO: Forest Resources Assessment 2000; agricultural land expansion; deforestation data

WCMC/CIFOR/UNEP: Protected areas

Convention on Biological Diversity: National reports

UNEP: Biodiversity country studies, Global Biodiversity Assessment, Environment Data Report

ECE: Polluted forest area data

WRI: Carbon storage and sink data

<u>Institutions and policy instruments</u>	FAO: National forest programme collection; research institutions; criteria and indicator processes; Forest Resources Assessment 2000; certification schemes
<u>Overarching review</u>	FAO: <u>State of the World's Forests</u>

B. Dissemination and accessibility through the Internet

56. Modern information media, such as the World Wide Web, provides for many interesting opportunities in accessibility and dissemination of information. One collaborative task for Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests member organizations as well as other partners could be to make their forest-related data collections available on the Internet. To some degree, this is already available, albeit not in a collective fashion. A proposal for action related to this issue is presented in the report of the Secretary-General on programme element II.e (E/CN.17/IPF/1998/___).

57. A notable emerging initiative is the consortium formed among the International Union for Forest Research Organisations, CIFOR, WCMC, the World Forest Institute, FAO, the Oxford Forest Institute and the European Forest Institute (EFI). These organizations are discussing methods to increase the accessibility of good, timely and reliable data on forests and their utilization. A number of options are being explored, including better synchronized connections on the Internet, more access at each institution, new investments in capability in developing countries and regional information centres.

VI. BACKGROUND DISCUSSION AND REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR THE THIRD SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON
FORESTS

58. For its background discussion at the second session, IFF may wish to consider the following:

(a) Not enough time has passed to discern concrete progress since the formulation of the IPF proposals for action. Several initiatives have, however, recently been launched in response to the IPF (see E/CN.17/IFF/1998/___);

(b) A process should be designed primarily to benefit and support country-level efforts and enable regional and/or global-level integration;

(c) The design of a framework that would enable monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests in the long term, using available and compatible data sources;

(d) Establishing parameters associated with economic, social, environmental and institutional aspects, which would recognize different conditions around the world, as well as acknowledge that progress for different parameters will be uneven globally among countries and locally within countries at different points in time;

(e) The value of monitoring increases with time and integration. There are several organizations that have collected data and information for a considerable time; synergies could be achieved through their collaboration and integrated analysis.

59. The report of the Secretary-General on programme element I.b for the third session of the Forum will take into account the guidance received during the background discussion at its second session, in particular comments on the critical parameters to assess sustainable forest management and on already existing efforts towards the integration of fragmented information.

Notes

¹ See "Synergies in national implementation: the Rio agreements", UNDP/Sustainable Energy and Environment Division, 1997.

² For further information, contact: SADC Forestry Sector Technical Coordination Unit, at <www.fstcu.org>.

³ For further information, contact: ASEAN Institute of Forest Management, at <www.jaring.my/aifm>.

⁴ For further information, contact the secretariat of the Convention, at: <www.unccd.ch/parti.html>.

⁵ For further information, contact: World Conservation Monitoring Centre, at <www.wcmc.org.uk/forest/data>.

⁶ For further information, contact: Trade and Media Services Limited, at <www.forestnet.com/journal/year>.

⁷ For further information, contact: Directory of Forest Products, Wood Science and Marketing Online, at <www.forestdirectory.com>.

⁸ For further information, contact: G8 Action Programme on Forests, at <<http://birmingham.g8summit.gov.uk>>.

⁹ Contact the site at <<http://www.un.org/esa/agend21/natlinfo/>>.
